



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023: ISSUE 2

WINTER

Oxford Lawns and Gardens Newsletter

Happy New Year!

I find the months of January and February long and bleak. Annually, in these months I undertake a horticultural course and this year I have completed Charles Dowdings' 'No Dig Gardening' course, which has been really informative, and will aid us in the quest to be a more sustainable Company. We will be applying some of the techniques learnt in the gardens, in particular composting and I have written a little more on Page 2.

No matter how bleak the weather the gardens do not sleep, buds are forming, bulbs are pushing up, and many plants are at their best. Snowdrops are synonymous with these months and we have a number of clients who are galanthophiles. Below are details of a few 'snowdrop' gardens which are well worth a visit.

Alex.

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Gardens to Visit for Snowdrops



- **Ilmington**, Warwickshire. Several Gardens are opening on the 12th February between 2-4pm with teas and cakes at the shop cafe. All proceeds go to Prostate and Pancreatic Cancer charities.
- **Batsford Arboretum**, Moreton in Marsh - open daily.
- **Colesbourne Gardens**, near Cheltenham GL53 9NP. Known as 'Englands Greatest Snowdrop Garden'. Open for five weekends from 28th January to 26th of February.
- **Hill Close Gardens**, Warwick. expected date 18th February, 11-4pm. Under the NGS, check website for confirmation.

Composting.

As part of our move towards organic and more sustainable principles, we will be working with all our clients to make composting a normal practice in their gardens. We have gardens where composting has been long established and we have several sites within the garden to do this. Some of the gardens with large areas of planting also require the addition of brought in compost and we are changing our supply. Why are we doing this? To reduce garden waste leaving site, and to minimise the amount of non-recyclable plastics brought onto site when purchasing the smaller bagged compost/soil conditioner. We now have access to a bulk supplier of compost, manure and mushroom compost.

Collecting autumn leaves, some grass cuttings, garden cuttings, kitchen vegetable scraps, cardboard and newspaper, we can make compost which will be put on the borders in winter. Compost when laid on top of the soil feeds the diverse microbiome and in turn, produces organic compounds through the mycelial network of mycorrhizal fungi which plants then access for food. This process will where possible also be carried out with other 'no dig' principles, leaving the soil in the main undisturbed. Any kind of digging disturbs the soils microbiome ability to produce nutrients for plants. Good compost can be made in 3 - 6 months depending on temperature and moisture.

Now is the perfect time to build these areas for composting before spring is upon us.



In the Gardens

By the third week of February we have almost turned the winter corner, the days are drawing out and there are a few 'spring' like days. It's the time of year when we are planning for the months ahead, still planting, replacing some structures, and putting compost down. We will be pruning shrubs and trees where required and pruning and training climbing plants. It's a busy time of year allowing us to be prepared for the madness of spring and summer in the gardens.

We still have a number of planting projects to complete, including a new mixed shrub and perennial border and regenerating a herb garden.

There are a number of shrubs and trees which flower through these months and many are highly scented, witchhazel, Chimonanthus, Cornus mas, along with some viburnum forms and the heavenly scent of sarcococca, daphne and winter honeysuckle Lonicera fragrantissima. Flowering from before Christmas the much maligned Mahonia is so sweetly scented and does have a place in a shrubbery or forming the backbone of a large mixed border. By mid February snowdrops are amass and hellebores are in full blousy flower. Like snowdrops, hellebores are also highly collectable and flower for weeks, a truly hardworking plant.

